



The fourth panel pictures the buildings of early Shakopee. The grey building to the left is the Methodist Episcopal Church, erected in 1867. In the background the red building is the City Hall and Fire Department, erected in 1883. The brown building is the Union School located between Holmes and Lewis Streets on the south side of Fifth Avenue, which opened on January 4, 1882. Farther along the panel is a 1908 dock scene of the wharf on the Minnesota River. The boats would dock at the shore or the levee and throw out a gang plank. A swinging bridge was built and the bridge swung around on its center pier.



The fifth panel shows a Shakopee soldier leaving for the Civil War. This panel also shows the first railroad train puffing into Shakopee on November 11, 1865. Shortly after, a combination engine and passenger car named "The Shakopee" made regular trips between Shakopee and Mendota.



The firefighters in this panel are shown fighting Shakopee's first great fire which occurred in 1872, destroying the frame railroad shops of the St. Paul and Sioux City Railroad along with all the equipment and five locomotives.



H. H. Strunk and Sons Drug Store and John Berens' Grocery Store are represented in the sixth panel (bottom left).



The seventh panel represent the 1909 Street Fair at which James J. Hill delivered an address to one of the largest gatherings Shakopee had ever entertained.



The eighth panel represents modern Shakopee in 1938-39. In the background are the water tower, Rock Spring Bottling Works, St. Mark's Church, the foundry, and Rahr Malting Plant. The new baseball stadium is also shown.

Gertrude Siebenaler Roepke, age 96, died on Wednesday, January 20, 2016 and is buried at the Catholic Cemetery. Thanks for her help, the information about the mural was written down for all of us. Photograph of the mural was by Jackie Colby, and more information was from Marion Heinen Caron.



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## SHAKOPEE HERITAGE SOCIETY



**Gertrude  
Siebenaler Roepke  
1919-2016**

Compiled and written by David R. Schleper, Shakopee Heritage Society © 2020



Gertrude Siebenaler Roepke was born in Vermillion, Minnesota on August 8, 1919, one of sixteen children of Leo and Magdalena Girgen Siebenaler.

Gertrude married John A. Roepke on March 13, 1947 in Shakopee.

Gertrude was a secretary for four superintendents of the Shakopee Public Schools, and was also a historian. She also documented the WPA Mural which is at 5th and Holmes Street in Shakopee.

The Federal Art Project was a New Deal program to fund the visual arts in the United States. It was created not as a cultural activity but as a relief measure to employ artists and artisans. One of the WPA Murals was painted in Shakopee 80 years ago.

The project created more than 200,000 separate works, some of them remaining among the most significant pieces of public art in the country.

Artists were paid \$23.60 a week; tax-supported institutions such as schools, hospitals and public buildings paid only for materials. In 1938, John Metcalf, Superintendent of the Shakopee Public Schools, asked the Federal Art Project of the WPA to do a mural. The mural was to be at the School Library, and to show the history of Shakopee from 1842 until 1940.



On left is John Metcalf, who was superintendent of Shakopee Public Schools who asked for the mural. On right is also part of the first mural, showing the first steamboat to churn the muddy waters of the Minnesota River in 1842 bearing a party of pleasure seekers to the Prairieville.



Muralist Harmon Arndt, a graduate of the Minneapolis School of Art, was employed to do the work.

Harmon Arndt met with several of the town's leading citizens, the school board, high school students and John Metcalf. After many meetings, the work began. Three other artists assisted Arndt who supervised the work. Classes of 1938, 1939 and 1940 donated funds to pay for the mural project.

The second panel (bottom left) represents the laying out of the town site (even though a village of Tínta Oturwe and 600 Dakota Indians were already there for more than 150 years!) In the background is the tamarack log cabin/trading post of Oliver Faribault, who was 1/4 Dakota Indian. One important missing piece is that Oliver's wife, Wakan Yanke WiŋWaken, was also there (though not in the picture.) She was Dakota, and was born in the Minnesota Valley among her Dakota relatives, including Šakpe II. Another missing person was Joseph Godfrey, who was enslaved. Joseph helped build the cabin, and around 1847 he escaped, walking 40 miles along the St. Peter's river to freedom. Two other early settlers-colonizers including Thomas A. Holmes holding a scroll which is a plan of the future town; and David L. Fuller who looks through his surveyor's transit. One person not in the picture was William Louis Bill Quinn, who met with Thomas A. Holmes at Fort Snelling in fall of 1851. Thomas discussed looking for a possible place for townsites. Holmes engaged Quinn as a guide and companion on an investigating tour. Bill, who was part Cree, knew several languages, including Dakota, English, French, and Ojibwe.



The first panel depicts Reverend Samuel W. Pond teaching a group of Dakota Indians the Christian word for God and the arts of white culture and civilization. He and his brother, Gideon, came to Minnesota as missionaries from Connecticut in 1834, and in the fall of 1847, Samuel W. Pond, his wife, Cordelia Eggleston Pond, and their first three children came to the village of Tínta Oturwe, or prairie village. Samuel W. Pond called it Prairieville, and later was called Shakopee.



The third panel shows the coming of the settlers-colonizers in their covered wagons. In the background are the tipi of the Dakota, the original settlers of this territory (though since it was a summer planting village, they lived in tipi tanka, or big lodges, along with a few tipi.) The Dakota were forced off the land by land speculators and traders who made treaties, in which they often took advantage of the Dakota. The white population in 1852 consisted of about 20 families; the Indians numbered about 600. There were many Métis people here, and people spoke Dakota, French, and English.

